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NSC STAFF FOR SINGH

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PREL PHUM EAID KDEM EG

SUBJECT: EGYPT: MFA ASKS INTERNATIONAL REPUBLICAN
INSTITUTE TO SUSPEND OUTREACH WORK PENDING GOE APPROVAL OF
REGISTRATION APPLICATION

¶1. (SBU) ECPO Counselor and poloff attended a June 1 meeting at the MFA between IRI country director Gina London and Assistant Minister for North American Affairs Salama Shaker, which Shaker had called to address the issue of IRI's pending registration in Egypt. London apologized to Shaker for the delay in submission of the application and said that the delay was due to poor coordination between IRI and the Egyptian lawyer handling IRI's registration. Shaker, expressing surprise about the scope of IRI's work in Egypt, urged IRI to submit its completed application as soon as possible; London said she would do so by the second week of June. In response to London's inquiry about planned IRI activities for later in the month, including several training sessions for political party activists, Shaker strongly advised that IRI not proceed with any more public activities prior to receiving formal GOE registration. "We are in a critical situation," Shaker advised London. "We don't want you to be told to pack and go."

¶2. (SBU) At several times during the meeting, Shaker reiterated her view--shared she said by her other MFA colleagues--that IRI, and similar groups like NDI, have much to contribute to Egypt's political reform process, but she also emphasized that the IRI must be registered before it conducts additional work in Egypt. "Help us to help you do the excellent work that you need to do," Shaker told London.

¶3. (SBU) Shaker asked emboffs to ensure that NDI and IFES, the other U.S.-based democracy organizations now working in Egypt with USAID support, make urgent arrangements to call on her on June 4 or 5. Both groups have submitted their applications for formal registration to the MFA, but have not yet received approval. Post has passed Shaker's request to NDI and IFES and will assist with scheduling the meetings. NDI, IRI, and IFES have all been the subject of several negative articles in the Egyptian press, including Rose Al-Youssef, the tabloid that is widely believed to be influenced by the elements in the security apparatus and the NDP leadership.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: The GOE is well aware of the presence and activities of IRI, NDI, and IFES. Using the Consultative Group on Democracy and Governance Assistance, which has met on a monthly basis since early 2005, Post has kept the GOE apprised of directly-funded D&G initiatives, including the work of IRI, NDI, and IFES. In addition, NDI regional representative Joe Hall briefed FM Aboul Gheit about NDI's plans in August 2005, and NDI President Ken Wollack met with various senior GOE officials, including Interior Minister Adly, and briefed them about NDI's work plans during a late 2005 visit to Cairo. IFES, for its part, worked closely with

the GOE's State Information Service during preparation of a voting guide during the parliamentary elections. The negative media attention--combined with recent discussions between FM Aboul Gheit and the Deputy Secretary, as well as the Ambassador, on the registration issue--has injected a new urgency to the formalization of their status under Egyptian law. End comment.

JONES